

period of almost unprecedented growth and opportunity. The 1990s was a period in which people were working. We had increases in the number of jobs available, home ownership, personal income, and the stock market was moving up. The economy was growing.

It solves a lot of problems in a country when you have an economy that is growing. There is no social program that is as good as a good job that pays well, and people who are trained and skilled and able to assume those jobs.

But in recent years—the last year and a half, 2 years—we have hit some rough water here, and the economy is not doing well. We have a series of things that have happened.

Early in the President's term, he proposed a fiscal policy with a \$1.7 trillion tax cut, the bulk of which goes to the upper income folks in the country. And he said: Well, we are going to have surpluses for 10 straight years.

I was on this floor and said—I am the conservative on this—I don't think you ought to predict, with any precision, what is going to happen 10 years from now. We don't know what is going to happen 3 months from now or 3 years from now, let alone 10 years from now.

The President, and others here, insisted: No. We are going to have all these surpluses, and this money belongs to the American people. Let's give it back. Let's lock it in, and do it now.

In a matter of months, we had a war on terrorism, the terrible and tragic attack on this country of September 11. We have a recession that occurs shortly after this new fiscal policy is developed, which probably was occurring even as it was being developed. And then we have a series of corporate scandals, scandals unlike any we have seen in our lifetime, certainly, and perhaps in a century or so. In addition to that, we see a stock market that begins to collapse.

So all of these things, coming together, have dramatically changed what is happening in Government. Big budget surpluses have now turned to big budget deficits. And it is as if nothing has happened. We have the administration, the President, and others acting as if: Well, nothing has really changed. There is no need to be talking about these things.

Of course there is a need for us to be talking about them. Things have changed in a dramatic way. As a result of that, I think we ought to come together and have an economic summit of some type with the President, to talk about what kind of fiscal policy can put this country's economy back on track, so that those who are out of work can find work, so that those whose life savings in their 401(k)s, that have been dissipated, can begin to see them grow once again, so that the economy produces opportunity and jobs once again.

This isn't going to happen just by accident. It is going to happen if we take a look at what is not working and what

are the potential solutions to make it work.

I understand the discussion in the last few weeks has been all Iraq all the time. I am not suggesting it is not important. That is a very important matter, a serious and deadly issue for this country. It is also the case, however, as the newspaper tells us this morning, that the President is out 2 days a week campaigning across the country and fundraising and so on. He has a right to do that as well. But if he has the time to do that, then he also has the time to work with us to construct a fiscal policy that relates to what we face today.

Today we face an economy in trouble. We face a war on terror. We face budget surpluses that have turned to budget deficits. We face a stock market in great turmoil. We face a circumstance of well over 6 percent of our population out of work, unable to find jobs. It is time for us to stop, take stock, and evaluate what works and what doesn't. How do we put together a plan that moves this country toward economic opportunity and economic growth once again? I understand why some want to ignore it, but it is not the right thing for this country.

I have been chairing hearings for the last 8 or 10 months on the subject of corporate scandals. That is an important issue. It has also played a role in injuring the feelings of people and the confidence they have in the economy. There is a difference in how we view those issues.

For example, I was trying to offer an amendment to the corporate responsibility bill that passed the Senate. I was blocked by the Republican side. Regrettably, that amendment is not now law. The rest of the bill is law. The amendment is very simple. It says, if you are a corporate executive and you are taking a company into bankruptcy, the 12 months before you run that company into the ground, if you are getting bonus payments and incentive payments, we have a right to recapture them and force a disgorgement of those payments. You should not get incentives and bonuses when you run a company into the ground.

Since I was blocked from offering that and it is not now law—I will continue to try—the Financial Times came out with an analysis. They said that the 25 largest bankruptcies in America occurred in the last year and a half; 208 corporate executives took \$3.3 billion in compensation out of those corporations before those corporations were run into the ground. I will hold a hearing on that in the next couple weeks.

There is something fundamentally wrong with what is going on in those areas. We have people who don't want to talk about it. The administration doesn't want to talk about it. That is not the issue they want to bring to the floor and have a debate on. But that is what we should have a debate on. How do you establish confidence in this economy if you don't clear up those kinds of problems?

So whether it is corporate scandals, a troubled economy, a recession, a war on terrorism, a stock market that acts like a yo-yo, we need to put the pieces of this puzzle together again. It is not going to get put together by people just ignoring the issue.

One of the significant issues facing our country at this moment is an economy that is in very serious trouble. It does no service to our country to deny that. Let's try to find a way to fix it. There may not be a way where one party says, we have all the answers, or the other side says, we have all the answers. Maybe the answers are the best of what both have to offer, instead of getting the worst of what each has to offer. In order to get there, you have to sit down and talk about it.

I urge the President to respond to these requests for an economic summit, to sit down with us and talk about what is wrong with the economy and how you put this back together towards an economy and a future of economic growth and opportunity once again.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

NATIONAL AND DOMESTIC SECURITY

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I thank my colleague from North Dakota for raising what I think is an important and timely issue; that is, what are we going to focus on, what will be our interest, what will be the real objective and issue we will make the centerpiece for our discussion over the next 7 weeks before the election on November 5.

It is very clear what the President wants to focus on. He wants to focus, it appears, exclusively on the issue of Iraq. Of course, we all concede that national security is our No. 1 priority. I happen to believe, as most do, that Democrats and Republicans have stood together since September 11 of 2001. We have provided the President the resources with the authority, and we have told him we will stand shoulder to shoulder with him in fighting a war on terrorism.

There is little disagreement on Saddam Hussein and Iraq. I haven't heard a single Member of Congress from either party in either Chamber stand to defend Saddam Hussein. This man is a thug. He has been a threat to his own people, to the region, and certainly, if he is developing weapons of mass destruction, then they could be a threat way beyond that region of the world.

We have to take it very seriously, as we have. I thought we made real progress last week. There was a time in early August when voices from the White House were telling us: We are just going to have to go it alone. The United States will have to take on Saddam Hussein by itself. Incidentally, we don't need congressional approval. We have father Bush's war approval which

will be good enough for son Bush as President.

I disagree with that, but that was an argument being made out of the White House. There was also a suggestion that the President and the United States need not go to the United Nations to talk about inspections; that we would just, frankly, achieve regime change on our own.

Thank goodness cooler heads prevailed. Thank goodness, last week, the President not only acknowledged that he would come to Congress for any approval before we would go to war, he also went to the United Nations in New York on September 12 and made a historic speech, calling on the United Nations to live up to its responsibility, its mandate, in terms of the power and weaponry of Iraq, and basically said to the United Nations: It is time for us to prove this organization has a future.

Good news followed. This morning's paper suggests that Iraq got the message, a message delivered not just by the United Nations but by a lot of nations that historically had been at least friendly with Iraq and have now said they have no choice, they have to reopen their country to meaningful inspections. If the press reports are accurate, Saddam Hussein has said he will allow U.N. inspections on an unconditional basis now. That is a dramatic mark of progress. I hope the White House will take yes for an answer. I hope the White House will realize that we can seize a historic opportunity to send inspection teams in to find out exactly what is going on in Iraq.

If it is threatening to us, to anyone in the region, or to the people of Iraq, we have to use the authority of the United Nations to make certain that it becomes a peaceful situation. I think progress has been made. I will tip my hat to the President and to those in the White House for that fact.

But mark my words, there are some who will not take yes for an answer. They won't be satisfied that the U.N. is living up to its responsibility if it sends in inspectors. They will not be satisfied that Saddam Hussein has said: We are opening our borders. They will say: We can't trust him. It will never work. Let's prepare to invade.

That makes a mockery of the President's visit to New York last week, to the United Nations. He has called on the United Nations to act. Now it is time to give them an opportunity to act. We should respond accordingly. If it is successful, if we can bring Iraq under control through this fashion, without a war, without the loss of innocent life, then thank goodness we can consider that alternative, and we should pursue it. If not, of course, there is another day for us to consider the options that may be at our disposal.

That is the issue of national security. I have to tell you, as I travel around the State of Illinois, there are people who want to talk about other issues of security; for example, health care secu-

The Presiding Officer, the Senator from Michigan, has been a leader on the issue of prescription drugs. As I go about the State of Illinois, people are interested in Iraq, but I still run into people, senior citizens in particular but ordinary families as well, who talk about the fact that they cannot afford to buy the prescriptions they need to keep themselves and their children healthy. I don't see the kind of fervor and desire coming out of the Republican side when it comes to health care security as there is for national security.

When it comes to health care security, the cost of health insurance, I went yesterday to speak to the Illinois State Chamber of Commerce. The members who were gathered there of the major corporations in Illinois agree with the major unions in Illinois that the cost of health insurance is bankrupting our system. Businesses cannot afford to buy insurance for the owners of the business, let alone for the employees. The premiums go up 25, 35 percent a year. Labor unions are seeing every increasing dollar amount on an hourly basis eaten up completely by the cost of health insurance increases.

Have we heard a word from this administration about health care security, about the cost of health insurance? Of course not.

Mr. REID. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. DURBIN. I am happy to yield.

Mr. REID. I also heard the Senator from North Dakota speak this morning. It appears that I am hearing the fact that we can talk about Iraq and, at the same time, we can deal with some of these economic issues with this staggering economy. Is that what the Senator is saying?

Mr. DURBIN. That is exactly right. I say this to the people at the White House who make up the schedule: Can you give us 4 hours a week on the economy? Pick the 4 hours and let's talk about it in realistic terms. Let's talk about health security 1 hour a week. Can we do that? Can the White House find time in the busy schedule of dealing with national security and making campaign trips to raise money for candidates to give us 1 hour a week to talk about health care? I don't think that is too much to ask. And I think Congress ought to reciprocate. We ought to be answering in terms of what we can do to try to lift the burden, whether it is the cost of prescription drugs or the cost of health insurance for businesses and families across America.

Mr. REID. Will the Senator yield for another question?

Mr. DURBIN. I am happy to yield.

Mr. REID. The Senator served in the House of Representatives. Is the Senator aware that this administration—a Republican administration—has significant control and direction that it can give to the House of Representatives, which is led by the Republicans?

Mr. DURBIN. Absolutely. The Speaker of the House almost has unilateral

power to set the business for the House, now controlled by the President's party.

Mr. REID. Would the Senator acknowledge that the House basically has been doing nothing? We have appropriations bills that we are waiting for them to do. I have not heard the President say one word about the inaction of the House. Has the Senator?

Mr. DURBIN. I have not. The Senator is aware of the fact that we have the Patients' Bill of Rights that has gone nowhere in conference with the House and Senate, and there are issues we have tried to raise time and again—energy, for example—and all of these things have died in conference.

Mr. REID. Would the Senator also acknowledge that this bill, which is very important to constituencies all over America, on terrorism insurance—and the President went to Pennsylvania a couple weeks ago and said: I am for hardhats, not for trial lawyers. Does the Senator realize that is lost because the Republican House will not let us even hold a meeting on this bill?

Mr. DURBIN. I am aware of that. I say to the Senator from Nevada that I heard from not only businesses and developers and unions but from ordinary people about terrorism insurance. There is a fear—legitimate fear—if we don't pass something soon, it is going to have a dramatic negative impact on employment.

We are already losing jobs. That is another issue the White House won't discuss. I have talked about national security and health care security. There is an income security thing, as well—not only the loss of jobs in this country but terrorism insurance plays right into this. What is the President doing? What is Congress doing? Can the President give us 1 hour a week on the economy, 1 hour a week on income security, to talk about what we can do to increase the number of jobs? A meeting in Waco, TX, in August for a day is not enough. It takes a bipartisan, honest effort and to engage the Congress in doing something. Let's pass the terrorism bill. Let's have the President call on Democrats and Republicans to get it done this week. We should do it this week. If we do not, we are not meeting our responsibility.

Mr. REID. If the Senator will further yield, the Senator is aware that the newspapers in Washington indicate that the President has been in Iowa, over the period of a year, I think 11 times. The Senator is aware that Iowa is where the first primary is held. The Senator from Illinois is aware that Iowa is where there are close elections.

I would like the Senator to respond, isn't it necessary that the President be more engaged in what is going on in domestic issues rather than politicking around the country?

Mr. DURBIN. That is the very point I am making. I concede that the President is the leader of his party, and every President has spent time trying to help his party and its candidates. I

don't begrudge any President doing that as we come close to an election. As I travel in my State, the people are more focused on the problems that families are running into when it comes to the basic necessities of life than on the next election. They are hoping this President and all candidates will address issues as basic as income security, health care security, and, may I add, pension security.

This is something that has become a devastating issue for families in Illinois. Former steelworkers worked a lifetime and paid in religiously, week after week, month after month, year after year, with the promise that when they retired, they would have a pension and health care. They now find themselves high and dry with bankrupt companies. I haven't heard a word from the administration about pension security. This really hits a lot of people close to home.

I grew up in an area in Illinois that had a lot of steel mills. I used to apply there for jobs in the summer and hope that I could get one of those great-paying jobs. I have gone to meet with displaced steelworkers. I see tough men, muscular people, who worked hard their whole lives, who just don't take much foolishness at all, break down and cry in front of me because at age 59 they have lost all their health insurance protection. These are retirees who really followed the rules and did what they were supposed to do in America. Can we ask the President for 1 hour a week to talk about pension security—Just 1 hour? I think that would be an indication the President is listening to the people across America in terms of the economic issues.

Mr. REID. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. DURBIN. Yes.

Mr. REID. It has been discussed on the floor that we have held up in the other body, which has the ability to move very quickly, terrorism insurance, Patients' Bill of Rights, election reform, energy policies for this country, bankruptcy reform. So we know things are held up there.

Now, I say to my friend from Illinois, I am kind of a hawk. I was the first Democrat to support President Bush when he wanted to go into Iraq the first time. I consider myself a hawk rather than a dove. I am looking very closely at Iraq and I think we need to do that. But in doing that, is the Senator aware that Lawrence Lindsey, the President's chief economic adviser, indicated in the Wall Street Journal yesterday that the war in Iraq will cost this country about \$200 billion? Is the Senator also aware that I had a conversation with the chief executive officers of the airlines last Thursday in my office? The first thing the spokesperson, the chief executive officer of one of the largest airlines in the world, told me was: If there is a war in Iraq, we all go broke.

That was told to me in my office last week: If there is a war in Iraq, we all go broke, all the major airlines in America.

So the Senator is aware we not only need to focus on Iraq—the military aspects of it—but also what it does to the domestic policy, which the President is ignoring. Is the Senator aware we need to also consider that?

Mr. DURBIN. That is a very important point, not to mention the most basic concern, of course. If we go to war, lives of Americans will be lost. Innocent people will die. War should be the last decision we make, the last option we take. Thank goodness, we now have movement through the United Nations. I am asking that the President and the White House, now that progress is being made, spend some small portion of their time focusing on the economic issues the Senator from Nevada raises. I have talked about health care security, income security, pension security. I will add a fourth one—Social Security.

We realize the President's tax package of last year is going to take \$2 trillion out of the Social Security trust fund over the next 10 years—\$2 trillion—with no promise to repay any of it at a time when the baby boomers, by the millions, will start arriving and asking for Social Security. Social Security is our contract with America—our real contract—the one that comes from the heart. We have had it since the days of Franklin Roosevelt. Is it too much to ask this administration to give us an hour a week to focus on Social Security and its future, and Medicare, talk about the reimbursement for health care for senior citizens and hospitals and providers across America? These are real issues. I certainly have hospitals in rural areas and hospitals in the inner city struggling to survive at this point in time.

When you talk about the issues on which we should be focusing, national security is important, and I think it ought to be No. 1 on the agenda; but, for goodness' sake, don't ignore the rest of America and the lives we have to lead and the impact that our failure to act is going to have. That is why I look at 7 weeks before the next election and say to the President and the White House: Give us an hour a week at least to talk about the economy in this country, about the need to breathe life back into this economy.

It is only 2 years ago we were doing so well. We had all of this accumulation of wealth. People saw their retirement plans growing. They were making plans to leave their jobs early and enjoy a comfortable life with their families.

People were seeing their stock portfolios improving to the point where they were considering options. They knew they had money to send their kids to college. Now look what we are up against, and not a word from the White House. One little meeting in Waco, TX, does not make economic policy for America.

Where is this administration? Where is this President? Where is the economic leadership this country needs?

Mr. REID. Will the Senator yield for another question?

Mr. DURBIN. I will be happy to yield.

Mr. REID. Las Vegas, Clark County, has the sixth largest school district in America. About 250,000 students go to school in the Las Vegas area in one school district. Chicago, I am sure, is larger than that; is that not true?

(Mr. CARPER assumed the Chair.)

Mr. DURBIN. That is true.

Mr. REID. Has the Senator heard coming from the White House during the past 2 months, 3 months, a single word about education?

Mr. DURBIN. No, I have not. I say to the Senator from Nevada, he joined me and Democrats and Republicans in passing the No Child Left Behind legislation the President asked for to put more resources in education. The Senator from Nevada is just as aware as I am that when the President's budget came up, he did not fund his own programs. He did not put the money into the schools as he promised.

As I go across my State—and I bet the State of Nevada is in the same situation—we have seen a downturn in State revenues, cutbacks in State budgets, schools are suffering. They are saying: Where is that Federal money President Bush promised us? It is not there, and this administration does not want to talk about that. They do not want to talk about education security for this country. They want to talk only about national security. They do not want to talk about income security, pension security, health care security, Social Security, or doing something to make our schools more secure.

One has to ask oneself: Is that as good as it gets? Is that the best we can hope for from this White House, to focus exclusively on Iraq and the Middle East? I think it is a mistake.

We have made progress. I tip my hat to the President. Let's use the United Nations. Let's bring Saddam Hussein under control, but for goodness' sake, let's get our economy under control, too. It is really out of hand. People across the country—families, small businesses, family farmers—are suffering as a result.

Ms. STABENOW. Will my friend from Illinois yield?

Mr. DURBIN. I will be happy to yield.

Ms. STABENOW. Having had the opportunity to preside and listen to the discussion, I thank him for putting into perspective what our challenge is, not only on the national security front; I thank him for focusing on the fact we are together and stand for safety and security, but also the fact we need to be focused on our economic security as well.

Mr. President, I wonder, also, if the Senator might add to his list—I know he is aware of the fact we have passed a very important prescription drug bill. We had two focuses in the Senate: One, to add Medicare coverage and, two, to lower prices for everyone.

The point the Senator from Illinois made this morning about the high

price of health care for businesses, for our farmers, for everybody is also very much a part of what we passed to lower prices by getting more competition with generic drugs, opening the border to Canada to bring lower prices, giving States more flexibility.

I wonder if the Senator will comment on the fact that the Senate has passed this very important bill, sent it to the House, and it has received no action this fall. We have nothing yet in committee. We have not seen the President speaking out about the fact we passed a bill that will actually lower prices, bring more competition, address the fact that our seniors and our families are having to struggle right now—in fact, right now, as we are here, there are people who are watching C-SPAN 2 saying: Do I eat today or buy my medicine?

We had a bill which passed the Senate. We would greatly appreciate the President's leadership in encouraging the House of Representatives to pass this bill this fall. We could dramatically lower prices immediately with the passage of that bill.

Mr. DURBIN. I say to the Senator from Michigan, first, let me acknowledge—and I am sure my colleagues know as well—Senator STABENOW has been a leader on the issue of prescription drugs. She has been tenacious. Thank goodness she has been. She took a bus trip to Canada.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the majority leader has expired. Twenty-eight minutes remain on the other side.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that until someone comes from the other side, we be allowed to use that time. The minute someone's head pops in that door, we will quit. In the meantime, there seems to be no need to have the Senate voiceless.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank the Chair. I thank the Senator from Nevada.

The point the Senator from Michigan makes is an important one. We did pass a prescription drug bill. It was not what we wanted. We wanted a voluntary program under Medicare which would be universal and available for all Americans so they could get the benefits of Medicare when it came to prescription drugs.

We could not convince our Republican friends to go along with us on that, but we did pass a bill in terms of generic drugs to reduce costs for all families across America, to let States come up with their own plans so they could find ways to reduce costs for all the citizens in their State, as well as the safe reimportation of drugs from countries that have much lower costs. Those are three good issues, but do not forget the fourth.

Senator ROCKEFELLER's amendment provides that \$6 billion, on an emergency basis, will be given for Medicaid to States facing high unemployment.

These States have cut back in reimbursements to providers and hospitals. My State is one of them—I bet the State of Michigan is too—and that \$6 billion would come back to the States right now. It would help them keep hospitals open and provide basic health care.

We cannot get the House of Representatives to consider that legislation. Now they are talking about dropping everything and coming up with a resolution on Iraq. Why is it they can drop everything for a resolution on Iraq, but cannot drop everything, when it comes to prescription drugs, to move the issue forward?

Our bill is there. It is pending. It would be a help to all families across America, not just the families of senior citizens.

I say to the Senator from Michigan, we have to keep reminding the President and the Republican leadership that there are many issues in this country, not the least of which is good quality health care for everyone.

Ms. STABENOW. Absolutely.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, before the Senator yields, may I ask one more question?

Mr. DURBIN. Of course.

Mr. REID. What the Senator said is we can focus on Iraq and that there are many issues the President can help us on: Getting appropriations bills passed in the House would help us; doing something on election reform—we had another debacle in Florida 2 years after the original debacle; we passed a bill and are waiting to get that out of conference. We have the energy bill we need to get out of conference with the House. There is terrorism insurance, bankruptcy—am I missing anything?—generic drugs. That is one issue about which the Senator from Illinois and I did not talk.

Mr. DURBIN. Patients' Bill of Rights.

Mr. REID. Patients' Bill of Rights. There are so many issues with which we need to deal in the Congress that the President can help us with if we were not on the one track of Iraq.

It seems to me—and one can read about this in the editorial pages every day—that the President could be doing this to divert attention from these domestic issues. Has the Senator read some of those comments, I say to my friend from Illinois?

Mr. DURBIN. I have read the speculation. I do not buy it. I do not believe it, but the point I am trying to make in the course of this—and I think we all are—is that the President has made progress. The United Nations is moving forward. Inspections are going to be ordered. Saddam Hussein has agreed to them. That is real progress. I salute the President for that progress.

What I am now saying is, let's focus on America and some of the things we need to do to win the economic war in this country. I am asking for a very

small pledge of time from the White House to focus on these economic issues that face our country. We can do both. The United States can defend itself, fight a war on terrorism, keep a watchful eye on Iraq and still be worried about the issues that American families in Nevada, Illinois, and Delaware think about every day: What about my job? What about my pension? How am I going to pay for that health insurance? Can we pay for these prescription drugs? Is Social Security really in good shape for years to come?

These are real gut-wrenching issues for real families. I think it is a responsibility of the White House to get beyond the agenda they have focused on for the last several weeks and open it up to new issues and new concerns that are universal across America.

We talked about education. Kids are back in school, and there is a lot of concern about whether our schools have the quality teachers they need, whether the kids are going to get the education they deserve. We have to put money back in education. We have to focus on making certain we have after-school programs for kids who need a special helping hand, smaller class sizes—something we pushed for in the past—make sure teachers are paid as the professionals they are. These are real needs.

When we talk about filling real needs, I do not want to overlook in health care a shortage in nursing. I would like the White House to give us 15 minutes this week or next week with an idea for the agenda of having more nurses in America. This is a serious shortcoming in health care in the United States. Hospitals have reduced their number of beds; nursing and convalescent homes, the same, for one simple reason: There are not enough nurses.

We need an initiative, a national leadership. I hope the President will not ignore this. When you listen to the agenda we could be considering, it is substantial, but it gets to the heart of the real issues about which Americans are concerned. I sincerely hope we move on that and move on it quickly. We owe it to the American people.

I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DOING THE SENATE'S WORK

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I know Senators are just getting back into town from the Jewish holiday yesterday. And I hope we can make the most of this week. We have a lot to do, on the Interior appropriations bill as well as on the issue of homeland security.